

Reading Toolkit: Grade 7 Objective 2.A.6.c

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 6. Read critically to evaluate informational text

Objective c. Analyze the text and its information for reliability

Assessment Limits:

Connections between the credentials of the author and the information in the text

Factual basis of the information in the text

Currency of the information in the text

Verification of information across multiple sources

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Lesson Seeds

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Activities

The teacher will divide the class into four groups and provide each group with a different text focused on a single subject. These texts should be a mixture of fiction and nonfiction. For example, skateboarding is a topic about which both fiction and nonfiction text should be available. Each student within the group will read the text. Once reading is complete, the group will select pieces of information they agree are factual and pieces of information they agree are fictional. Each group should be able to justify why their selections are fact or fiction. Each group should share its text and its findings with the entire class. During the sharing any errors on the part of the group should be corrected. Finally, the teacher should pose this question to the class: If you were assigned to write a paragraph about _____, which text would provide you with the most accurate information? Teacher and students should discuss all texts to determine which would prove the most reliable for the task and why it would be reliable. Teacher Note: This activity will be more successful with students if the teacher models the procedure first with a single passage.

First, the teacher should make certain that students know the difference between a fact and an opinion. The teacher will select an informational text where ideally there are facts, supported opinions, and unsupported opinions. Together, teacher and students will read the passage and examine its content for facts, opinions, and supported opinions. As teacher and students peruse the passage, they should track their findings on a chart.

Facts from the text...	Opinions from the text...	Opinions from the text which are supported by facts

Once the reading of the passage and the chart are complete, students have a map of the content of the passage. To extend the activity teacher and students can focus on the "Fact" column, return to the text, and determine if there is anything in the text like quotes from experts, first-person accounts, statistics, etc...that speak to the reliability of the fact.

Teacher Note: Once the teacher has guided students through this process, they may work independently through the same process with a different text or may advance to comparing texts to determine the one, which is more reliable.

The teacher will provide students with two pieces of informational text about the same topic—one that is current and one that is less current. The teacher will tell students that they must select which text they would use to complete a research of the stated topic. Students may work individually, with a partner, or in small groups. First, both texts should be read. Second, the author and his/her credentials, if available, should be noted. Within the text, any dates, quotes and their speakers, statistics, specific places and events should be recorded. Third, any information in both texts where one text contradicts the other should be noted. Once all of this information has been gathered, students should judge which text provides the better information to complete research.

Using a presenter attached to the Internet or multiple pieces of the same informational text, the teacher should guide students through an informational passage. As the teacher and students work their way through the article, the teacher will point out evidence that the selected article is a reliable one and how that evidence shows reliability. The evidence and how that evidence is reliable can be recorded on a T chart, which will serve as a guide for an independent student activity. Once the article has been examined, the teacher should provide students with four to five samples of informational passages, which they will read, and using the information from the chart determine the degree of reliability of each passage. Some may prove highly reliable; others only moderately reliable while others may not be at all reliable and yet others have no way of proving their reliability at all. Finally all information from the activity should be shared in a general class discussion where any questions about reliability are made clear.

Clarification

Reading Grade 7 Indicator 2.A.6

To show proficiency of **critical evaluation of informational text**, a reader must form a number of judgments about a text. To begin this process a reader must preview the text and its features and combine that information with prior knowledge to set a purpose for reading. During and after reading, the evaluation of informational text requires a reader to **determine the content of the text, the role of text features, text elements that make that text a reliable source, the author's opinion, argument, or position, the effectiveness and purpose of the author's word choice, and the effectiveness of the author's style**. A full evaluation of an informational text requires attention to each of these elements.

To begin a critical evaluation of informational text, a reader must use prior knowledge and preview the text to establish a purpose for reading. Once a purpose is established, that is followed by a close reading of the text. Next, a reader must judge how well the text provides information for the stated purpose for reading. Then a critical reader should be able to verbalize or scribe an explanation or analysis of the text by focusing on specific sections of that text and detailing how that **information meets or does not meet a stated purpose for reading**.

If that purpose is not met, a critical reader should be able to **identify those pieces of information that are needed to fully construct meaning**. Additional information may include more details within the text, more text features, or adjustments to the organizational pattern or existing text features. To determine what is required for meaning, a critical reader should closely read the existing text and then assess the degree to which the text meets a reader's purpose. A reader should note particularly the organizational pattern of the text and see how well that pattern helps a reader construct meanings from important ideas in the text. Those gaps in information that make it difficult for a reader to construct meaning signal the types of additional information that are needed.

The **analysis of informational text for reliability** is an important aspect in the text's critical evaluation. A reader must first discern how much of the text is factual. Once the factual information is isolated, judgments about its accuracy are necessary. A reader should access information about the author and his/her credentials as a means of assessing the passage's reliability. Depending upon the subject of the text and how current the information is also a reliability factor. When available, a reader can access other texts on the same subject to see if there is a consistency in the information. Finally after looking at multiple texts on the same subject, a reader can determine if the initial text contains the same information as the subsequent texts or if the initial text presents information not contained in the others. A discrepancy in information could point to an inaccuracy in a text or to a more current source of information.

Once reliability has been established, a reader should carefully note elements of text that address the **author's argument or produce clarity of the author's position on the topic**. Additionally, a reader should be attuned to **elements of bias** in the author's presentation of material. After reading is complete, a reader must implicitly understand the stated or implied main idea of the text. From that basis of understanding, a reader should look at the construction of the author's argument, noting any evidence of bias in the argument and looking for a fair treatment of opposing views on the topic. At that juncture a reader should be able to judge the impartiality of the material or the inclination of the author to present a single view of the topic. Based on that text evidence, a reader can make a critical decision about the text's fullness or limits of use to him/herself.

After a reader knows how useful a text might be, a determination can be made about what **additional information could help a reader construct meaning from the text**. Active reading skills will allow a reader to note a stated or implied main idea in the text. Then a reader can identify additional information that would add to, clarify, or strengthen their understanding of the text or the author's viewpoint. A reader's suggestions for additional information could include, but not be limited to

- Text features such as bulleted lists, captions, graphics, italicized or bold print etc.
- Information to address readers' questions that were not answered in the text
- Context clues, footnotes, or glossed words to help a reader understand unfamiliar words and phrases

A critical evaluation of a text also demands that a reader detect **words that authors use to affect a reader's feelings**. A critical reader can determine a reason for the author's word choice and the response the author wished to evoke. At the center of any persuasive text is a strong opinion, and authors use words to their advantage to create a strong emotional appeal to a reader. Repetition, rhetorical questions, hyperbole etc...all have the power to sway a reader's perceptions. A critical reader is aware of the power of words and examines this word choice to discern the author's tone. For example, a critical reader should be able to discern the difference in tone between "The hero was brave as he flew into the battle alone." from "The pilot was foolhardy flying into battle without cover." A critical reader must also note the portion of text where repetitions occur and determine why an author would wish to draw attention to that portion of text. Critical readers are aware of these elements and should be able to determine if they enhance an author's viewpoint. Finally critical readers should isolate elements that are used purely for emotional appeal and are not supported by fact.

Ultimately a critical reader should be able to **analyze an author's style** which is how an author uses language to relay ideas. An author's particular style has a direct effect upon the meaning of a text. For example, authors may use formal language to convey the seriousness of material or informal language to address the entertainment value of a topic. Or an author may use an informal style with a serious topic to evoke a particular response and cause a critical reader to consider why an author would not match style to topic. That disconnect between style and topic has a critical effect upon construction of meaning. A critical reader should also note how the author forms and uses sentences. The constant use of long, involved sentences or short, choppy sentences or a combination of both can alert a reader to a variety of emphases within a text. An author might use this stylistic formula to draw attention to a particular idea or to diminish the effect of an idea. Using sentence fragments is another way authors can achieve those same effects. Finally a critical reader should be aware that how the author uses language, makes choices about words, and constructs sentences that are planned so that a critical reader can develop insight into the author's intended meaning of a text.